THE Reconstructionist

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THE Reconstructionist

Vol. X. March 3, 1944 Adar 8, 5704 No. 2

EDITORIALS

A PURIM MESSAGE FOR OUR DAY

THE festival of Purim calls attention once more to the perpetual need of fighting Jew-hatred. The way the problem is conceived in the traditional observance of Purim is instructive. Though Purim is not, in the strict sense of the word, a *religious* holiday, and though the Book of Esther, which is read on that occasion, does not even mention the name of God, Purim nevertheless has a place in the religious calendar of the Jews, and the Book of Esther is part of Sacred Scriptures.

The reason is that, for our forefathers, the fight against Jew-hatred had a significance that transcended the mere desire for immediate safety of life, limb and property. It was conceived as part of the struggle for maintaining Judaism, the religious civilization of the Jewish people. It represented the perpetual warfare of the God of Israel against Amalek, the embodiment of arbitrary violence whose hand was ever "against the throne of God." Israel, in defending its right to life and freedom, was at the same time defending the civilization which proclaimed the sovereignty of God and the unity of mankind under that sovereignty.

To carry out in our day the implications of this attitude toward anti-Semitism, Jews should seek to combat it in a way that emphasizes the relation of our fight against those who would destroy or enslave us, to our will to live as Jews. As a corollary to this proposition, the fight against anti-Semitism should be conducted, not by organizations created expressly for that purpose, but by organizations that assert, also in other ways, the Jewish community will to live.

When the fight against anti-Semitism is conducted by associations which regard it as their sole or primary function, their efforts are less likely to succeed and may involve very unpleasant consequences.

This becomes apparent when we consider the different points of view from which anti-Semitism may be combated. It may be attacked on two contrary grounds. Some Jews oppose it because it does not permit them to escape from Judaism via assimilation, others because it does not permit them to enjoy the maximum of freedom for Jewish life. We are survivalists, but we maintain the right of those individuals who do not wish to remain Jews to leave us and identify themselves with some other community.

It is a very doubtful advantage to the Jewish community to have to carry on its rolls people who have no love for or loyalty toward it and would prefer to forsake it. But we should certainly insist that Jews who want to live as Jews are entitled to do so without being penalized for their loyalty. When a Jewish organization which is interested in every phase of Judaism wages war against the enemies of the Jews, it thus tends to do justice to both points of view from which anti-Semitism is attacked. It is to its interest to recognize and defend the right of the individual to choose freely for himself the religious and cultural community to which he wishes to belong.

But when the work is left to organizations created for no other purpose, it is possible that they embark on a policy which may stress the motive of the right to be assimilated, in ways which are detrimental to the right of Jews to live as Jews. Our civic-protective organizations sometimes wage their fight behind a "non-sectarian" or "Christian" front. This tends to obscure the issue of the right of Judaism to perpetuate itself. Such front organizations usually condemn anti-Semitism as a propaganda line spread by enemy aliens for the purpose of disrupting the peace of the country. Anti-Semitism does indeed lend itself to subversive action. But the implication that many see in this approach to the problem is dangerous. The implication is that imported anti-Semitism is vicious, but the native kind, when the threat of foreign war is past, is quite legitimate.

Again, organizations to combat anti-Semitism, when they are composed mainly of assimilationist Jews, have at times been guilty of insinuations against their fellow Jews. They argue that, if it were not for anti-Semitism, Jews would be thoroughly assimilated in all respects except for forms of religious worship, and that the "outlandish" customs of the Orthodox and the "divided loyalties" of Zionists would disappear with the abolition of anti-Semitism. They thus put in jeopardy the right of the Jews to live Judaism in accordance with their own conscience.

If the battle against anti-Semitism were conducted by organizations which are concerned with every aspect of Jewish life, such as some of our Jewish community councils, for example, mistakes like that would not be likely to be made. The organizations by whom the fight would be conducted would, by their very existence, affirm the right of the Jews not merely to live as individual human beings, but as Jews, members of the Jewish religious and cultural community.

For that reason, we hail, as a step in the right direction, the inclusion of Jewish Community Councils in the newly created National Community Relations Advisory Council which also includes the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and the Jewish Labor Committee. This step helps to make our struggle against anti-Semitism appear as an assertion of our right to keep the Jewish people alive and free to bring its distinctive contribution to our common civilization.

A JOB FOR THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY RELATIONS ADVISORY COUNCIL

THE decision of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (CJFWF) to create the National Community Relations Advisory Council came as a result of the pressure of public opinion to bring a measure of order and unity into the work of civic-protective organizations. Ever since the breakdown of the General Jewish Council, the disappointment of the public with the failure of the national

organizations engaged in that kind of work to collaborate and stop working at cross purposes has been vocal in the deliberations of the CJFWF. After protracted negotiations and long debate, the new Advisory Council was established in which fourteen local Community Councils are represented as well as the national organizations whose failure to agree on a program has constituted the problem. Now that the Advisory Council has come into existence, its first job should be to put an end to the current indirect hostilities between the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress.

We refer specifically to the sniping in which Judge Joseph M. Proskauer, president of the American Jewish Committee, recently engaged against *The Protestant,* at a seminar in Pittsburgh on "Anti-Semitism in the United States." At this seminar Judge Proskauer warned against "false friends" who participate in the struggle against anti-Semitism for their own ends. He cited as examples of such false friends, Kenneth Leslie, editor of *The Protestant,* and the "Text Book Commission," formed by him to secure the elimination of all hate-inciting and, particularly, anti-Semitic references from textbooks. Judge Proskauer charged that Leslie was primarily anti-Catholic rather than pro-Jewish and that his activities were aimed mainly at attacking Catholics rather than at aiding Jews.

We hold no brief for all that *The Protestant* writes or does. We do not regard it within the province of *The Protestant,* for example, to comment on the withdrawal of the American Jewish Committee from the Conference, which is purely a Jewish matter. But we see no justification for Judge Proskauer's aspersions on the genuineness of *The Protestant's* interest in combating anti-Semitism. No doubt Judge Proskauer was incensed by its attack on the American Jewish Committee and by the knowledge that the American Jewish Congress is interested in *The Protestant,* as the American Jewish Committee is in the National Conference of Christians and Jews. If the American Jewish Congress inspired the criticism of the American Jewish Committee in *The Protestant,* this action, too, should be censored by the Advisory Council.

We realize that the Council's powers are limited, that it may only advise but cannot directly control the work of the national organizations in the field of civic-protective activities. But its influence on public opinion is considerable, and none of these organizations can long afford to defy public opinion. Nor can there be any doubt that the Jewish public wants these organizations to fight anti-Semitism, not each other, not even when the strategy of their mutual conflicts is to snipe at each other's allies. Here is a job for the Advisory Council that will put its mettle to a severe test. We hope that it will stand the test.

WHAT IS JUDAISM?

THE hearings before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, on the resolution favoring the ultimate establishment of a "free and democratic Jewish commonwealth" in Palestine, must have made confusion worse confounded in the minds of the Congressmen, the Jews and the general public. The Jewish opposition was represented by Mr. Lessing Rosenwald and Rabbi Louis Wolsey, of the American Council for Judaism.

After having spent a long time fighting Zionism because it was "secular," these gentlemen suddenly shifted their ground and accused the Zionists of attempting to set up a "theocracy" in Palestine. They

made it appear as though a group of ecclesiastics, constituting an hereditary priesthood, were seeking to revive an ancient cult on the basis of some supernatural sanction, and with the intention of throttling the democratic process. This came close upon the heels of the testimony for the resolution by one of the Zionist leaders who pointed out that it was no accident that the various Zionist bodies were headed by rabbis. The evidence was certainly disquieting. At least, it had that effect upon the Congressman who became frightened and asked whether the matter should not be looked into more carefully.

This led, apparently, to a discussion of the nature of Judaism. How define it? Mr. Rosenwald defined Judaism as a religion. The Zionist leaders conceded this, but added it was also a nationality. If it was a religion and a nationality, did this not imply that it was a "theocracy?" And so on.

The tragedy of our time was vividly demonstrated at that hearing: Judaism in search of a definition. At a crucial moment, when clarity and consistent formulation were urgently needed, they were lacking. *This,* if anything, was no accident. For a whole generation, Jewish leaders have been minimizing the importance of defining Judaism. They have declared that Judaism is *sui generis,* which is largely true; but they have carried this conviction to the absurd limit where definition has been ruled out as impossible. Judaism, they have said, is so different from any known phenomena that to define it, as to define God, is at best futile, and at worst, blasphemous. Others have resisted defining Judaism in intelligible terms on the assumption that Judaism and the Jews would suffer from the process. Zionists particularly have shied away from too close an affinity to Jewish religion for fear that the contemporary prejudice against religion would cost Zionism support and adherents. When the backing of religionists became a desideratum, "religion" was quickly adopted as an ally.

Now, we are quite aware of the fact that the ultimate disposition of the Palestine problem will be determined by many factors—oil, war, strategy, the Arabs, etc. But this fact does not absolve us Zionists from doing the best job we can of presenting our case before the non-Jewish world. And it seems to us that, if the definition of Judaism as "an evolving religious civilization" had been offered to the world and to Congress, they might have at least understood our position, even though they might not have been any the more impelled to grant us what we ask.

We could have pointed out that, as a civilization, we represent a complete cultural group, with a land, a language, a history, traditions, ethics, folklore and folkways, literature, customs and a *religion;* that as a "religious" civilization we are not inherently different from any other except insofar as we have focused all the institutions of our civilization upon the supreme task of achieving salvation for our members, that the development of ethical personalities and the realization of social ideals have been the essential goals of our civilization, rather than the extension of our possessions or the imposition of our will by force upon others. We should have shown that this civilization of ours is an evolving one, that we contemporary Jews are living through a metamorphosis, entering upon a new stage in our history, that for one thousand years we lived as a nation upon our land, and for two thousand years as a theocracy upon foreign soil, and that now we are determined to become a new type of people, with a free and democratic center in Palestine for those who desire to live

Jewish civilization as a primary one, and with democratic communities in the Diaspora for those Jews who prefer to retain a different primary civilization and would live their Judaism as a secondary civilization. We should have pointed out that whereas, until only a short time ago, we functioned as a theocracy, we are now in the process of reconstructing our civilization on a basis of a humanistic religion and a democratic social framework.

Such a definition of Judaism as a whole shows the organic character of Judaism, and the interrelatedness of its religion, nationhood, culture and history. It explains the revolutionary character of Zionism, as the prime expression of the end of theocracy and the emergence of the humanistic and democratic forces. To put it modestly, we believe it makes sense, and we think it would appeal to others. The time has come for the moratorium on ideology to end. Zionists and all other Jewish survivalists should begin now to consider seriously the merits of our definition, and if they reject it to offer a decent alternative.

REALITIES AND VALUES

The New School for Social Research is offering a course in the theory of Jewish migration and the methods of Jewish emigrant aid. The course is designed to prepare social workers for the overseas activities of the Hias-Ica Emigration Association. It will discuss the origin and character of modern migrations, the international, historical, demographic and economic aspects of the migration problem and will survey the immigration laws of different countries, particularly as they affect the Jewish people. The offering of such instruction by the New School for Social Research is certainly commendable. But why, we should like to know, has no seminary or school of higher Jewish learning felt the need for offering courses of research, if not into the immigration problem, then into the many other problems of modern Jewish social life? Surely we have enough problems that cry for a solution based on accurate knowledge of facts and insight into their significance. Must Jewish research forever concern itself only with delving into antiquities?

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Speaking at the opening session of the Hias-Ica training course, offered by the New School for Social Research, Earl G. Harrison, Commissioner of Immigration, predicted a change in United States immigration laws after the war. According to him the system of quota based on the country of origin of the immigrant would be abandoned for one based on his occupation and linked in some way with the United States Employment Service. Though admitting that "such a quota basis would certainly present serious difficulties and might be subject to serious objections," he maintained that it "would possess the advantage of giving the incoming alien a maximum opportunity for gainful employment at a favorable wage level." It would also have the advantage, which he did not mention, of detaching our immigration policy from the racial myth of Nordic superiority which was invoked in support of the present legislation at the time of its adoption. The theory was that the racial and national composition of the American population should always be kept predominantly "Nordic (American for Aryan). We hope that Commissioner Harrison will prove to be a true prophet.

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The National Conference to Combat Anti-Semitism which was held in New York on February 13-14 was, in many respects a notable event. It called attention to the many fronts on which the fight against anti-Semitism has

to be conducted by having leaders in the field of government, religion, labor, education and civic welfare participate in the discussions. It elicited from the President of the United States a forceful letter asserting that "whoever condones or participates in anti-Semitism plays Hitler's game." Though we hold, as expressed in our Purim editorial, that the fight of the Jewish people against anti-Semitism could best be conducted by an organization interested in promoting every aspect of Jewish life, we appreciate the value of the Conference. It was at least held in the name of the Jews and did not make the mistake of hiding behind some general religious or patriotic front. It made it plain that Jews have sufficient self-respect to stand up publicly for their rights.

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Our ancestors would be amazed by many of the things that are going on in Palestine these days; but they would certainly be shocked—and pleased—by the sight of the small, surviving community of Samaritans joining with representatives of Jewish Palestine in prayers for the Jews of Europe. The very presence of Samaritans evokes visions of the Assyrian invaders, the return of the Jews under Ezra and Nehemiah, in fact, the whole range of Jewish history from ancient times to our own. The Samaritans have fought assimilation in Palestine as vigorously as, and even more so than, the Jews in the dispersion, and they have preserved a purity of racial strain which is remarkable. Relations between the Samaritans and the Jews have not always been very friendly. Let us hope that the tragedy of European Jews will help to heal the long-standing breach.

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The decision of the American Jewish Conference to invite the cooperation of Jewish organizations engaged in or interested in Jewish rescue deserves commendation. If the War Refugee Board is to function well, it must have the active help of private bodies; and if private bodies are to be of real assistance, they cannot afford to burden the Board with internecine quarrels. The next step is now up to the Emergency Committee for the Rescue of Jews. If the leaders of the Emergency Committee are sincere, they will certainly accept this invitation with alacrity. And if they do, the Conference would do well to receive them. This was the burden of our recent editorial dealing with the Emergency Committee.

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The Commission on Justice and Peace of the Central Conference of American Rabbis has issued an appeal to Americans to remedy the "grave injustice" of anti-Negro discrimination. "We look forward," they say, "to the time when the evil of race prejudice will be cleansed from every phase of our national life." This appeal is certainly in order at this time. We should like to see Jewish organizations go further, however. There is a specific phase of the problem which involves the relations of Negroes and Jews. There is anti-Semitism among the Negroes which is quite disturbing; and, on the other hand, Jews, as Jews, have not attempted to deal with instances of anti-Negroism among Jews. May we add that the well-known congregation in Houston did not help matters much by inserting into its Principles the assertion that its members are "of Caucasian race." For a group that does not believe in race, this is absurd. For a religious body that believes in equality, it is destructive. Of all religious groups, the Jews should be the last to draw the color line. They should certainly not be the only group, as they would become if they adopted the Principles of that congregation in Houston.

The Jewish Mission

By BERNARD HELLER

ONE of the concepts that need re-examination and re-appraisal is that involved in the belief that the Jews have been singled out and given a unique role to play in the spiritual drama of man. The questions which press for an answer are: Have the Jews a mission? What is the nature of this mission?

The Mission Theory in Reform Judaism

The belief that the Jewish people has a mission is supposed to have become ascendant in Jewish thought when the ghetto was abolished and civil and political rights were granted to Jews. The event was hailed as heralding a new era, which would be marked by a spirit of enlightenment and human brotherhood. The modern rabbis felt themselves called upon to answer the query, "Why continue now to be Jews?" The theory of the Jewish Mission was then developed. In brief, it affirms that the Jews have been commisioned by God to teach monotheism, justice and the universal kinship of all men, to the nations of the world.

This doctrine, it must be pointed out, did not originate with the Reformers. One may find the belief expressed in the Pentateuch and in the inspiring utterances of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. It constitutes one of the major motifs of the Book of Jonah. The selection and adoption of this book as the *haftarah* for the afternoon service of the Day of Atonement evidence Catholic Israel's unqualified acceptance of the tenet.

The identification of the doctrine with the theology of the Reformers, however, is not unwarranted. For, while they did not conceive it, they furbished it and gave it a conspicuous place in their theology. They also set it in a new frame. Said they: To carry out effectively this predestined task, Providence uprooted the Jew from his reclusive setting in Palestine and made him a ubiquitous people. They termed the exile not a punishment for sins, but a blessing in that it made the Jew the agent for the universal redemption of mankind. Israel could then truly become a "light unto the nations."

However we may differ with Reform Judaism's specifications of what the mission is to be and the procedure by which it will be actualized, we may not deny the presence in Jewish consciousness of an abiding conviction that Providence or Destiny has assigned to Israel a unique part to play in the spiritual development of man. One must not confuse the adventitious elements of the doctrine with the part of it which is basic and has ever been present even in the incipient stages of Judaism.

During the twenties, Jewish liberals and intellectuals were in the habit of ridiculing those who professed belief that the Jews have a mission. They built up a formidable case against the doctrine. These were their objections:

1. This supposition, in their opinion, reflects a colossal amount of conceit, for it implies a claim that Judaism possesses superior religious concepts and a higher ethical consciousness of right and justice. Both of these presumptions they regard as preposterous. Such a claim may have been justified a long time ago when other peoples believed in idols and national deities and maintained galley slaves. Now, such a claim does not hold water. Christians, despite their use of trinitarian phraseology (not to mention the Unitarians, the Universalists and the Modernists of even the orthodox camps), believe

in the universal God. Justice and Righteousness are the prerogatives not of one people, but of humanity. They are ideals which are striven for and prized by all men.

2. Another criticism is leveled not so much against the profession as against the professors of the mission theory. The critics say to them in effect: You have a mission to teach the world religion and ethics, but look at yourselves and notice the hypocrisy of your claim. For while you claim to be commissioned to proselytize the Gentiles, you are actually becoming proselytized by them. You are on the brink of becoming assimilated. Your life is un-Jewish. Your thoughts are non-Jewish. Your interests are predominantly materialistic. Your business ethics, if not inferior, is surely not superior to that of non-Jews. Zangwill cleverly and aptly described the mission of the contemporary Jew to be one of submission.

3. The last objection to the mission theory which should be cited is based on the supposedly covert psychic weakness, which, it is contended, brought this theory to such prominent position in recent Jewish theology. The mission claim, it was maintained, is not so much the result of the superiority as of the inferiority complex of the Jew. It is the defense mechanism of that subconscious, self-deprecatory feeling of the Jew by which he hopes to excuse and justify the persistence of himself in a predominantly non-Jewish world. It is an apology for his Jewishness and a relic of ghetto servility. The Jew has not yet learned to say "I am here as I am. I have the right to be as I am and I mean to exercise that right which is as inviolable as is your right to be as you are. If self-realization is sacred, it is as sacred for me as it is for you and I need not seek a *raison d'etre* on the basis of what good I will do or contribute to others."

Recent Changes in Liberal Opinion About a Jewish Mission

In the early years of the succeeding decade, it was already evident to critically-minded persons that the very liberals and intellectuals who sneered at the belief that Jews had a mission, were modifying their former stand. They were beginning to suggest and to expound in lectures and in articles that it is especially incumbent upon Jews to manifest a relentless antagonism to Fascist forces and reactionary influence, and to be exemplary in their staunch defense of programs which aimed to insure social justice and the extension of democracy to the masses of all nations. The place of the Jew, said they, was to be in the vanguard of intrepid opponents of Nazism, not because he was singled out as the first victim, but because his history and national philosophy committed him to such a role. They deprecated an opposition which was impelled merely by a desire to save one's own skin, by considertions of temporary expediency. A few years previously, these liberals had been inclined to stigmatize people with a too sensitive awareness of moral responsibility to others as persons obsessed with a messianic complex. They had thought it smart to emulate H. L. Menken who was in the habit of standing at a distance and chuckling over the spectacle of the comic tragedy which *homo sapiens* was enacting. This very same liberal and intellectual has since been disposed to assume the role of a crusader. He not only preached on soap boxes in Union Square with the fervor of a Savanarola but he crossed oceans ot join Spanish comrades fighting and dying for the cause.

The change of attitude, it is true, did not come out of a clear sky. Recent events tended to alter his stand. There was the Communist experience in Russia, the financial debacle of 1929 and the years of depression which followed it, the grow-

ing shadow of the Nazi Ogre, the internecine conflict between the Loyalists and Nationalists in Spain, which the liberals rightly perceived as a dress rehearsal for the Global War, and the rise of the America First Committee with its menacing isolationism. These developments impelled them to slough off their former unconcern and become deadly serious about esteemed values and ways of life, *to the advancement of which they now felt Jews had a special obligation.*

We may see the dilemma and the struggle which was involved in the change of belief, in the writings of a gifted Yiddish journalist and thinker of that period, Dr. A. Ginsberg. In an article *Kurze Bemerkungen* (Brief Notices) (Forward, December 30, 1939), he comments on Dr. Cyrus Adler's reply to the President's invitation to him, as representative of Judaism, to confer on the subject of what the religions can contribute to the formulation of a peace program. In this reply, Dr. Adler cited the saying of Heinrich Graetz (ignored or forgotten in war time) that "Israel's mission is Peace." Dr. Ginsberg does not conceal his dislike and fear of beliefs in national missions. "Let us run away from missions. We have no mission of peace." Immediately, however, there follows the sentence, "We have an ideal, a hope, a striving for peace." In another article, *Yiddishe Missies, Alte und Neue* (Jewish Missions, Old and New) (Forward, January 20, 1940), he directs the reader's attention to the amazing survival of the Jew, whose enemies were always many and strong and inflicted blows that seemed sure to be fatal. Was the Jew's invincibility during these 3,000 years of persecution an event without spiritual meaning or goal, or does it indicate some moral plan or purpose?, he asks. Dr. Ginsberg then gives the religious and traditionalist answer—which asserts that the Jew had been divinely appointed to be man's ethical mentor and spiritual guide —a role, the price and rewards of which were vividly and realistically depicted by Isaiah (Chapter 42). Dr. Ginsberg acknowledges that such faith involves and reflects great idealism, and that its value is unquestioned, provided one can sincerely and fervently subscribe to the belief. He then cites the new and current mission-beliefs. How petty they seem to him besides the one which exalted and sustained the Jew throughout the unending array of ordeals and martyrdoms to which he was subjected. He concludes his article with these sentences: "Isaiah's mission continued for more than two and one-half thousand years, and it persists also to this day with the greater part of the Jewish people. How long can our current missions endure? If there is to be a mission, if without a mission we cannot manage, then let us at least acquire something that's fit, something that is great, for which it is worthwhile to suffer. Not 'Yiddishism' or 'Kulturism' and not all the other 'isms' will be able to produce the miracle."

If the story of the Jew's past and present discloses that he cannot escape a certain destiny, though he may be disposed like Jonah to shun the role which it imposes upon him, is it reasonable to suppose that the Jew will be able in the future to effectuate a change in his character and outlook? Will not the searing experiences of the current decade temper and strengthen his conviction that his survival is meaningful and purposeful.

The Mission Theory Reinterpreted

The mission belief to which the Jew will subscribe in the future, I am convinced, however, will not be identical with the one which his forebears affirmed. The new tenet, to be vital, will have to be the product of a reinterpretation. It

must be made to conform to prevailing philosophic doctrines and be at home in the current cultural milieu.

Before venturing on this reinterpretation it will be necessary to analyze the thought or thoughts traditionally associated with a mission-concept and separate the inessential accretions from the essential substance.

The claim or consciousness of a mission on the part of an individual or a people implies three things. First, the belief that a Being or a Body of unquestioned authority selected, dispatched and empowered the believers to exercise this mission. The missionaries of yore, the Prophets and Apostles, for example, believed themselves to have received a call and mandate from God. Like Isaiah, they beheld the Lord sitting upon a high and exalted throne, and like Isaiah, they heard His Voice commanding them, "Go ye and tell this people . . . return and be healed."

In positing a mission for ourselves, we as adherents of a rational interpretation of Judaism cannot resort to the claim of possessing a mandate from on High which is supernatural and exclusive. In other words, we must, though holding on to the belief in a mission, forego the notion that we alone have been supernaturally "chosen." We may, as Zangwill suggests, call ourselves a "choosing people" but not the only "chosen people." We must be willing to grant similar rights to any other people which feels itself conscious of a vision and values and a desire to share them with their fellow men.

We cannot offer the Biblical statements as a proof of such a selection and mission. As exponents of rational religion and the critical reading of the Bible, we cannot admit as proof for our claim records of supernatural phenomena or experiences. Our belief must be based on pragmatic and empiric grounds. *In the claim of a mission we must not go beyond the statement that that belief was the product of certain events and conditions, and that our call and command came in a natural way from the soul of Israel.* Now what theologian of the Orthodox school dare say that the soul of Israel is not itself a manifestation of godhood?

This brings us to the second notion which is associated with the profession of a mission. This notion is the feeling of the possession of the supreme if not the only truth. When the missionary braves the perils of a distant land and the hostility of savage natives he does this because he believes himself to have a message, a truth, or rather *the* truth, without the possession of which salvation is unattainable. The missionary's slogan therefore is, "I am the Light; I am the Way."

This notion of possessing *the* final truth and the only universal religion must be given up. I shall not go into the disputed question as to whether Judaism claimed and advocated the imposition of one universal and invariable belief upon all mankind, a view which is contradicted by many Biblical and Rabbinic utterances. But even if traditional Judaism expected unanimity of belief and uniformity of life we as liberals must reject this demand. We must do so not only because of its unfeasibility but even more so because it runs counter to our changed conception of the major purpose of religion. Religion, we have learned, aims not primarily to unravel the metaphysical secrets of the cosmos but to offer man spiritual expression and a sustaining philosophy of life. And both of these are variables that are dependent to a great extent on the particular abodes, habits, and temperaments of the believers. Our mission, therefore, must be identified not with the claim to religious superiority but rather with the claim to religious individuality.

The third attribute of the mission idea

is the consciousness of an aim or purpose, that dominates the believers. This feeling, unlike the first two, constitutes the very heart of the concept without which the belief cannot be professed or conceived. The soul of the missionary is and must be fired with a purpose for the realization of which he must strive and struggle. This connotation is the one that is now mostly associated with the term. A person is said to have a mission in life when he is guided by a purpose or an ideal in the light of which he consciously lives. Living with an eye ever focused on a goal is the basic meaning and implication of the mission-belief.

With this idea we must not part. *The mission of the Jew implies and ought to continue to imply a desire for conscious and purposeful Jewish living. The claim signifies that the Jew's persistence in his Judaism is the result not of a blind, unconscious force having its impetus in the distant past, but is the product of a desire whose source of strength and stimulation is the present, yes, even the future. The mission claim means that the Jew has a will to live and, what is more significant, a will to live on an ideal plane.*

The nature of the Jewish mission has been well defined in the traditional liturgy which the pious Jew recites daily. "Blessed is our God, who hath created us for His glory, and hath separated us from those that are aimless and hath given us an enduring Law and planted everlasting life in our midst. May He open our hearts unto His Law, and place the love and fear of Him within *our* hearts, thta we may not labor in vain nor bring forth vanity."

Such a mission does not prescribe armies of gospel-carriers and faith-exhorters. These missionaries if they will be at all interested in conversion, will resort not to aggressive propaganda to alter the beliefs of others but to exemplary behavior wherein the soul or the self of the missionaries would be the object of continuous concern and consecration. This mission spells the cultivation and expression of the sublime self of the believers.

Implications of the Mission As Reinterpreted

The Mission-Belief must therefore emphasize to the Jew, first, that he live an ideal Life, that he should reflect the tenets of his Torah or Culture (however he may interpret it) and the tendencies of its revered teachers and heroes. If righteousness be the need of the age, it becomes incumbent upon the Jew to lead a life of exemplary righteousness. If the age is devoid of saintliness and spiritual graces and refinement, it behooves the Jew to live his daily life so that he will superbly reveal such attributes and qualities. If the striving for truth and objectivity be lacking, the Jew must first venture forth and be assiduous in the pursuit of such a quest. If tolerance and sympathy be needed, it devolves upon the Jew to plant and practice these virtues in his own relationship with his fellow Jews as well as with non-Jews.

Secondly, the mission belief implies that the Jew strive also to maintain and safeguard his own individuality in whatever sphere of life it may express itself, even if it be in a phase of life which man today is inclined to term as purely secular (an attitude which Judaism never accepted). The Jew must not allow himself to become lost in the environment in which he may happen to move. Fate seems to have decreed that Israel should be the individualist amongst peoples and, on occasions, even stand opposed to his environment. His part was always to be contrary to the accepted and the dominant. He was always out of step. His

course was constantly "upstream." And even if he was too weak to resist the current, then he flowed downstream with his gaze toward the source of the stream. In the agricultural paganism of Canaan he persisted in his pastoral habits and traditions. When all nations modeled their life and principles after the philosophy of epicurean Hellenism, he persisted in adhering to a stern and simple ideal of Hebraism. When the whole world paid homage to Christ as God, he protested such a magnification of a human being by ignoring him.

What such minority divergences have meant and can mean for the mitigation of mob rule and mob psychoses, what they have meant and can mean for the progress of civilization and humanity can scarcely be overestimated.

Thirdly, the mission belief necessitates a stoic attitude on the part of the Jew to the inescapable trials and tribulations, which a faithful adherence to Judaism imposes. Suffering was, is and will continue to be the badge of our race. For Judaism cannot and will not offer to its exponents convenience. It involves courage and heroism. This is a demand which all ethical religions make of their devotees. It is, however, more the case with the exponent of a minority religion which multitudes have been and still are being taught to regard with suspicion and contempt.

The Nazis have made the Jew aware of the fact that History or Providence has singled him out to fight and to suffer for higher causes and values. They have also revealed to him the futility of his frantic efforts to evade the duties and escape the ordeals which the execution of his mission involves. Other people may have rendezvous with destiny, the Jew made an everlasting covenant with the Eternal. The lot of the assimilationist Jews of Germany during the Hitler regime testified to the truth of Moses' warning that doom awaits the individual who flatters himself on his ability to dissociate himself from the faith and fate of Israel (see Deuter. 29, 17-30).

The question which perturbs the mind of the farsighted teacher of Judaism is: "What will be the attitude of the Jew when the evil of Nazism will be extirpated, and democracy and tolerance and the professions of universal brotherhood will become shiboleths of liberalism? Will the sense of the mission of the Jew as here defined, weaken and wane? Will the Jew be like the character described by Dryden, "He trudged along, unknowing what he sought, and whistled as he went for want of thought," or will the Jew affirm with Mazzini that, "Life is a mission. Every other definition of life is false and leads all who accept it astray. Religion, science and philosophy, though still at variance upon many points, all agree in this that every existence is an aim."

BILLS IN CONGRESS WORTHY OF SUPPORT

H. R. 418, 419, Wright-Compton resolution asking the good offices of our government to open Palestine to free Jewish immigration and to facilitate the reconstitution of Palestine as a democratic Jewish commonwealth.

H. R. 51, to outlaw lynching. Introduced by former-Congressman Gavagan. Referred to House Judiciary Committee. Urge Committee to report favorably.

M. R. K.

The School and Community in Jewish Education

By WILLIAM CHOMSKY

A Community-Centered Curriculum

WE have, in the field of Jewish education, a variety of schools and programs of study. We have schools holding sessions once a week, three times a week and daily. Some of our schools emphasize one aspect of subject matter, others another. Different ideologies underlie a number of these different types of schools. Naturally the results vary in terms of content as well as of such wider aims, as social and personal adjustment. One thing all of our schools possess in common: their curricular work is by and large confined, literally and figuratively, within the four walls of the classroom or the school. Very few, if any, systematic attempts have been made to extend our program to include the social life-process, the community, where a real curriculum should find its point of contact and source of motivation, as well as an outlet for application. Wherever such attempts have been made, they have been incidental and desultory.

In a community program of education, an effort should be made to integrate the activities and curricula of the various schools, and to organize them around some cell or nucleus as a common denominator of minimum essentials. A common aim should be agreed on and set up, which all our schools, regardless of differences in ideologies and extent of program, should aim to achieve to a greater or lesser degree. Otherwise, these schools may be working at cross-purposes, entailing waste of public funds and energy and of educational opportunities in terms of community service.

It is generally agreed among modern educators that the task of education is two-fold: to enable each child to develop his individuality to the utmost, and to train him to participate intelligently and efficiently in the life and the work of his ever-widening social group. This participation should be directed toward the preservation of the traditional ways of life of the group, as well as toward the enrichment and improvement of this life in the light of the constantly changing conditions. It should begin as early as possible in the child's educational career, and it should grow and, increasingly with each year of his schooling, take on forms of positive community service. A well-organized community-centered curriculum will not only serve to improve the community, but will also contribute to the development of the individual and to the enhancement of his personality.

It is a well-established principle in modern psychology that the human mind acts as a unit and cannot be subdivided into aspects of thinking, feeling, memorization, habituation, and so on. All these aspects are closely correlated, interdependent, and knit together in a unitary pattern which is flexible and which constantly adapts itself to changing circumstances. We must teach the whole child and not the isolated fragment.

In other words, we must discard the notion that we can educate our children for life and for participation in communal activity, by subdividing the content of learning artificially into separate subjects. Such a procedure leads merely to the learning of lessons as memory content; it does not result in personality adjustment or in an attitude of communal responsibility and cooperation. In real life a child does not learn things in isolation and then use them. He watches things done in a social pattern. If he is

interested and ready for them he will make an effort to do the things observed, and he will learn to do them by and in this effort. This applies to walking, talking, handling tools, and so on. This procedure should also be followed in the conscious and formal learning of the school. Real education, education for life, should as far as possible reflect life situations, but in a selected, simplified and well-graded arrangement. The dead wood, the obsolete, the trivial, the sordid and the perverse should be weeded out. We must view our schools as a miniature community, reflecting the various activities of the community in a purified form in which they are performed intelligently and appreciatively. To quote a wise saying, "What we need most, is not so much to realize the ideal as to idealize the real."

In performing such activities in this manner, our children will grow into the life of the community normally and naturally, and they will be properly conditioned for the building of a better, spiritually richer and more meaningful community. Thus the school is employed by the community as an instrument not merely for perpetuating itself but also for enriching and elevating itself, for promoting its growth and for purifying itself by discarding all that is outworn and antiquated and by refining all that is coarse and inchoate.

The Nature of a Community

But what constitutes a community? Is it merely an aggregation of individuals living together within physical boundaries and carrying on normal activities? Is it just an assemblage of individuals bending their efforts toward a common end, or organized for the purpose of mutual aid and self-defense? A colony of ants does all that, but it cannot be said to constitute a community.

Dewey has something very pertinent and explicit to say in this connection, which is worth quoting at length:

"Persons do not become a society by living together in physical proximity any more than a man ceases to be socially influenced by being so many feet or miles removed from others. A book or letter may institute a more intimate association between human beings separated thousands of miles from each other than exists between dwellers under the same roof. Individuals do not even compose a social group because they all work for a common end. The parts of a machine work with a maximum of cooperativeness for a common result, but they do not form a community. If, however, they were all cognizant of the common end and all interested in it so that they regulated their specific activity in view of it, then they would form a community. But this would involve communication. Each would have to know what the other was about and would have to have some way of keeping the other informed as to his own purpose and progress. Consensus demands communication."

In other words, a community implies sharing of ideas, purposes, thoughts and emotions. But there must be something to share and something worth sharing, as well as proper facilities for communication. The community must be based on common memories, common experiences, common beliefs and practices, common aims and aspirations; as well as common means of sharing all these, such as language, art and music. By no stretch of the imagination can the term "community" be applied to a group of people banded together merely for purposes of self-defense; for charitable, social or fraternal causes; or even for the sake of worshiping together under the guidance of a minister or rabbi, who is charged with dispensing sacred knowledge and divine grace. All members of the community must be co-partners in the process

of sharing, a process which should enrich and enhance the lives of both the recipients and the givers.

The fact that some of our vital communal organizations have to resort periodically to special campaigns and methods of high-pressure salesmanship in order to gain membership and financial support is symptomatic. It reveals a weakness in the process of sharing and participation in common intellectual and emotional dispositions. It is certainly inconceivable that the results achieved by such sporadic propaganda methods can be more than transitory. No permanent or deep-seated loyalties can thus be engendered . The membership acquired by such methods is capable of rendering only lip-service, and it is dependent for its sustenance on artificial stimulants and blood-transfusions, on social pressure, or moral coercion and suasion. A community whose vital organs have to be kept up by such artificial means is hardly worthy of survival, nor can it long survive.

Even a superficial analysis of our present American Jewish community will point to a state of spiritual anemia. A large majority of our population is lamentably ignorant of the spiritual values and traditional heritage of our people. Their Jewish cultural standards and educational ambitions are abysmally low. The threads that hold together even those that are affiliated with our distinctly Jewish institutions are very tenuous and flimsy. Our communal endeavors and projects are motivated largely by a spirit of charity and relief rather than by a vision of long-range constructive planning. Jewish community life in this country is maintained largely by pressure from without and by a vague uneasy conscience from within, rather than by an impulse to carry on and pursue its historical destiny, or by a burning traditional idealism that beacons and leads to action.

The Content of Learning in the Community-Centered Curriculum

The task and role of Jewish education should, accordingly, be clear. It devolves upon the Jewish school to revitalize the Jewish community by providing training in intelligent community living, and to stimulate and foster a growing sense of communal responsibility. This can be accomplished most efficiently in and by the process of participation. This process begins in a small area, but grows, expands and deepens with the maturity and progress of the learner. In the advanced grades and in the week-day schools the process of participation will naturally be richer and broader than in the lower grades or in the Sunday schools, but in all grades and in all types of schools it will be carried on within the possible limits of the respective programs.

On a previous occasion I attempted to discuss the possibilities of a community-centered curriculum as exemplified by the course of study prepared under the auspices of the Allied Jewish Appeal of Philadelphia ("Toward A Real Jewish Education," The Reconstructionist, Vol. 8, No. 19.) At this time I want to take as an illustration one of the phases of community activity and show how it can be utilized as learning content in our community-centered curriculum.

Several times during the year our children are called upon to raise funds for the various agencies concerned with the upbuilding of Palestine, such as the Jewish National Fund, Halutzim funds, and so on. They sell flowers, stamps and what not; and they rather enjoy these activities. But what do they get out of them from an educational point of view? Their interest is centered chiefly in the amounts they collect, in the prizes they will get, or just in the activity itself. They may also experience some vague patronizing feeling for the "poor fellow Jews of Palestine." They may have been told

about these collections the day before, but they will forget all about them the day after. The real meaning and purposes of these activities are largely ignored. They are either not discussed at all in the classroom, or they are touched upon superficially and perfunctorily, because the teacher does not want to "waste time" on "non-essentials."

But just these "non-essential" and "extra-curricular" activities may hold the real solution to our curricular problem. These activities may serve to bridge the gap between our cloistered curriculum and the environment from which our curriculum should draw its motivation and toward the reconstruction of which it should be directed.

Thus, these fund-raising activities may open wide channels into discussions on the relation of the Jews to Palestine; into the study of relevant Jewish history, of the Hebrew language and literature, of holidays and festivals, customs and ceremonies, and of all such customary curricular materials. But they will not be taught in the usual way, in an unrelated and desultory manner, merely as so much memory content to be swallowed whole, then to be regurgitated in the recitation.

One more example: The principal or rabbi may consider the advisability of organizing a junior congregation. Steps in this direction may then be taken and the congregation may be organized in a conventional manner, in mechanical imitation of the adult congregation. But what a waste of educational opportunities!

This matter can, however, be handled as follows: After suggesting and motivating the idea of organizing a junior congregation, the pupils may be guided to discuss the reasons for doing so. Some such questions as the following could be posed for study and discussion: Why do we need a junior congregation? Why cannot the synagogue for adults meet our needs? What is the synagogue for any way? Why do we need it? What place did the Jewish synagogue occupy in the past: during the days of the first Temple, in the Babylonian captivity, in the days of the second Temple, during the later periods of Jewish history? What activities and functions did it perform? To what degree does the modern synagogue in America fulfil its traditional aim and program? What are some of the reasons for its curtailed program of activities? What may be done to restore to the synagogue some parts or phases of this program? How can we make our junior congragation resemble, as nearly as possible, the traditional synagogue in its all-embracing program? What types of synagogues do we have in our community? In what ways do they differ? Which do we prefer? Why? What selections of the prayerbook, or Bible, should we include in our service? What chants, melodies, etc.? What parts of the services should be rendered in English?

The results of such a procedure can be readily anticipated. Our pupils will learn, in the first place, a great deal about the history of the synagogue and its central position in Jewish communal life. They will also learn about the character of the modern synagogue and its relation to the local Jewish community and its activities. They will, likewise, be strongly motivated to learn the ritual, the prayers, the chants, the Bible readings, etc., to be introduced in the services. Incidentally, they will also learn to do their own thinking, their own planning, their own making of choices and decisions, under the stimulation and guidance of the teacher. They will thus receive most valuable training in the practice of democratic living and thinking.

The same procedure may be applied to the other aspects of community life and

programs, such as are included in the above-mentioned course of study. The educational advantages of such an approach are obvious and can be envisaged by an examination of the materials incorporated in this course. All the regular school-subjects may be organized around each communal activity as a central and integrating core, and against the background of community living, all these subjects take on meaning and applicability.

The Jewish community in its full ramifications is not geographically circumscribed. It is as large as the world and as old as historical memory. Hence the problems and the circumstances relating to the Jews the world over are subject matter for our community-centered curriculum. Moreover, the Jewish community of the present cannot be dissociated from antecedents in the past and studied as an isolated segment. Life is dynamic, an ongoing process, and any such vital institutions as compose our community, are deeply rooted in experiences and experimentations of our people with the practical issues of living. It can be studied and understood only in relation to these historic experiences. This implies, of course, a mastery of the means of communication with the past; namely, a knowledge of the Hebrew language, without which no real communication of the most profound and intimate experiences and dispositions is possible. A common language is a potent factor in creating a feeling of community, while the absence of such a language entails a state of disunity. This implies, likewise, an understanding and appreciation of all the traditional experiences, ideals, loyalties, hopes and aspirations, which are embodied in our literature, and in our practices, customs and beliefs; in brief, the whole fabric of our present curriculum, but in relation to our environment and community life.

Toward a Better Community

Such a community-centered curriculum will provide for the pupils in all types of schools the minimum equipment necessary for sharing in those intellectual and emotional dispositions which members of a wholesome Jewish community should have in common. Those who receive a more intensive Jewish education will have opportunities to reach out into the deeper and wider background of these dispositions. Their knowledge of Hebrew and their study of the original sources of Judaism will enable them to strike deeper roots into the soil of our culture and civilization. They will be equipped to draw their spiritual sustenance to a greater degree from the accumulated resources of our people and from our ancient traditions, and they will have a more profound understanding of the wider implications of community living, ideals and aspirations. But all children, regardless of the extent and nature of the educational program should acquire an understanding of the structure of the Jewish community The should know and appreciate the aims and purposes of the various projects and activities undertaken by the community. They should, above all, attain a "we" feeling, a feeling of kinship with *Kelal Yisrael,* a sense of being an integral part of a larger social process. They should also achieve a desire to participate in this process, to further it, to elevate it, and to direct it toward a common end shared by the community.

Discussion in Theology

IS RELIGION COMPATIBLE WITH NATURALISM?

THE history of religion may be said to be the history of the different interpretations which men have given to their experience of the environment or the cosmos as dependable, from the standpoint of what they regard as salvation. The modern-minded person wants particularly to know what interpretation of this experience is compatible with a naturalistic philosophy of life.

There is a naturalistic philosophy of life which is incompatible with religion or spirituality of any kind. That is the philosophy which reduces all manifestations of life, including thought, to mere operations of matter and physico-chemical causes. In such a philosophy, there is no room for belief in spiritual values as having any inherent potency.

But there is a type of naturalism which recognizes qualitative distinctions between lower and higher orders of being. That type of naturalism allows for creative or emergent evolution, and for the autonomous functioning of mind and spirit. For that kind of philosophy, the data of rational and spiritual experience are not merely by-products of sense experience. Truth, justice, love, are conceived as operating in their own right and helping to bring order out of chaos. Hence there is no reason for dismissing the experience of selfhood or personality as illusion. By the same token we must accept as genuine the experience of godhood, which is to the environment or cosmos what selfhood or personality is to the body. To these two spiritual qualities, selfhood and godhood, we must add "society," which occupies a position intermediate between them, and shares something of the nature of each. Though all these three are data of natural experience, they transcend the brief life of the individual human being, and redeem it of its merely temporary character, in that they enable him to lay up resources and create potentialities that outlast him.

The average person finds it difficult to asribe to selfhood, society and godhood as much reality as he does to objects of the senses. A table, a chair or the sun is for him eminently real, but their field of operation in relation to him or to other objects does not seem quite so real. As a matter of fact, he lacks words to denote fields of operation as such. But there are certain fields of operation which he cannot help reckoning with. Those are the networks of relationships which arise from the interaction of his body with other bodies and with the environment as a whole. Each such network functions with an impact far stronger than that of any object of the senses. Yet, because the average person assumes that anything to be real must be as discrete as an object of the senses, he reifies those particular fields of operation (i.e., he deals with them as though they were things). He thinks of them as though they were discrete entities and he calls them respectively self, nation and God.

It might help us free ourselves from this tendency to reify or "thingify" godhood, if we would recall that in religion —not in metaphysics—the term "God" is correctly used as a correlative noun, like the word "Father," or "King." For the

worshipper, God is always the God of a person, of a people, or of the world. As little as one should expect "fatherhood" or "kinghood" of an individual to have substantive existence, so little should one expect godhood to be concretized into substantive existence. No one ever actually sees a father or a king; one thinks them. Why then should one expect to see God? He can only be an object of thought.

Some time ago, in one of his radio addresses, President Roosevelt tried to define the meaning of "country":

> Ask them (the men in the fighting forces), what they are fighting for, and everyone of them will say: "I am fighting for my country.' Ask them what they really mean by that, and you will get what, on the surface, may seem to be a wide variety of answers. One will say that he is fighting for the right to say what he pleases and to read and listen to what he likes. Another will say he is fighting because he never wants to see the swastika flying over the old First Baptist Church on Elm Street. Another soldier will say that he is fighting for the right to work to earn three square meals a day for himself and his folks. Another will say he is fighting in this World War so that his children and his grandchildren will not have to go back to Europe, or Africa, or Asia, or the Solomon Island, to do this ugly job all over again. And all these answers really add up to the same thing: Every American fights for freedom.

In the foregoing statement, President Roosevelt enumerates various interpretations of country. The reason for our having so many interpretations is that country is not a discrete thing but a spiritual datum. It is a field of operation which cannot be caught or exhaustively expressed in a substantive term. We feel the reality of country nowadays almost every waking moment. This is the case because spiritual realities are experienced with greatest intensity in times of crisis. But even in peaceful times, we would not question the reality of our country, though it can not be regarded as having substantive existence. We surely do not mean by country either the physical land in which we live, or the people in it, but the field of operation, or network of relationships, to which the answers in the above quotation point.

Is "country" impersonal? Certainly not, since it exercises its influence on our lives by virtue of the most important elements of human personality. The like may be said of God, since godhood derives its significance from those same elements of human personality. This, of course, does not imply that the personality of country is like the personality of the individual, or that the personality of godhood is like that of either. We do not hesitate, however, to address our country as though it were a person. We sing "My country, 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, Of thee I sing." Why, then, shall we not continue to address God in prayer and song, as we address a person? This is what mankind has instinctively done throughout the ages. That, however, should not prevent us from realizing that the nature of God's personality shares none of the limitations of human personality.

What besides personality can we ascribe to God? Theologians were wont to ascribe to God omniscience and omnipotence together with perfect goodness. On the other hand, it had never occurred to priests or prophets, sages or psalmists to ascribe to God such absolute qualities as those terms designate. To be sure, these religious enthusiasts described God as all-powerful, all-good and all-wise; God was to them the very source of power, goodness and wisdom. Their main purpose, however, in ascribing all these attributes to God was to stress His superiority to anything human. They saw no necessity, however, for dealing in absolutes.

Thanks to this fact, religious enthusiasts never experienced any intellectual conflict between the existence of God and the existence of evil, whether in the form of sin or of suffering. From their point

of view, all physical disasters and all forms of cruelty and death which exist in the world were either to be taken for granted without questioning, or were to be regarded as due to man's violation of God's will. The author of Job is not troubled by the fact that evil as such is incompatible with the idea of God. All that disturbs him is that Job, who was innocent, should have been unjustly stricken in his body and possessions. But why God, who is both omniscient and omnipotent, does not use his omniscience and omnipotence to forestall the evil that man does, is a question which could never have occurred to an ancient believer. In that respect the believer was nearer the truth than the philosopher.

Viewing the experience of godhood objectively, it becomes evident that such experience is unthinkable except on a background of evil, in the same way as light is unthinkable except on a background of darkness. Evil becomes the very occasion for that experience. Man could not be aware that the cosmos may be depended on to further his salvation, unless there were a background of circumstances challenging that fact. All awareness implies the possible negation of that which we are aware of. The awareness of godhood thus necessarily implies the existence of evil.

At the same time, however, the awareness of godhood also implies that the potency of the good is greater than that of the evil. The sense of greater potency arises out of the fact that, whereas the evil is such by reason of its being fortuitous and aimless, the good is such by reason of its having a purpose. We say, "Where there is a will there is a way." By that we record the experience that, despite the obstacles to a determined will presented by circumstances which are fortuitous or which are less informed by will, the determined will is known to win out in the end. Likewise, when we affirm the experience of "godhood," we necessarily affirm the faith that, despite the obstacles to man's salvation, there are enough forces in the world which can be depended on to enable man to achieve it. "This much can be said with assurance," writes a modern theologian, "that we live in a world where the triumph of evil can never be complete, since evil systems destroy themselves by their own greed and egotism."

When, however, we not only reify or hypostatize but also absolutize godhood, we are confronted by a logical dilemma. If we assume that God is absolutely omnipotent we must necessarily negate the existence of anything that might even attempt to resist or oppose Him. On the other hand, we cannot deny the existence of evil which by its very nature is the antithesis of godhood. Not a single one of the numerous theodicies, or attempts of thinkers to reconcile the justice of God with the existence of evil, has ever been convincing. The fact probably is that when we absolutize the concept of godhood, we necessarily come up against those antinomies or inherent contradictions which Kant has pointed out the mind encounters, whenever it tries to predicate anything concerning ultimate reality. We might perhaps resolve the dilemma by assuming that the omnipotence of God is not an actual fact at any point of time, but a potential fact in terms of the infinite duration of godhood.

The various discussions of the idea of God in the recent issues of THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST are intended to point out that it is a mistake to try to understand what we mean by the term "God," if we study it apart from the unique striving of man to make the most of his life. This striving, to be properly understood and evaluated, must be viewed as functioning in three distinct dimensions of human life. In each of these dimensions, man

experiences specific data. In the dimension of the spirit, he experiences God, or more accurately stated, the reality of godhood, whether or not he identify that reality by the name "God." Godhood is that particular quality which marks all experiences to the extent that they further man's salvation or growth. Historically the datum of godhood has been subjected to the most diverse interpretations by the various theologies and philosophies of mankind. It is not the intellectual interpretation of godhood, however, that is the basis for the existence of different or rival religions. The lines of demarcation are drawn by the specific persons, objects, events, texts, etc., which constitute the *sancta* or media through which the members of a people or church experience godhood.

It is important to recognize that the belief in God is entirely compatible with naturalism, in which qualities, relations and values are accorded at least as much reality as the objects of the senses. The concept "God" is a hypostatization of that field of operation in the universe or that quality in it, which has to do with our quest after salvation. As for the problem of evil, however we may solve it metaphysically, it belongs to the unresolved antinomies of the human mind.

The basic problem of religion, insofar as religion is to serve human life, is not the metaphysical nature of godhood, but what we shall regard as salvation. If we assume that salvation means the acquisition of as much power as possible to carry on in the area of human life the same kind of struggle for survival that goes on in the rest of nature, no belief in God, however devout, nor any conception of Him, however lucid, will save mankind from universal cataclysm. If we want to create an international society which will make the atrocity of war impossible, we must learn to conceive salvation as synonymous with the harmonious fulfilment of the three groups of human interests—those of welfare, reason and spirit. Then, no matter how we conceive the nature of God, his Kingdom will at last be established on earth, and all men, regardless of race, color or creed, will know one another as fellow citizen of that Kingdom.

MORDECAI M. KAPLAN

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST SEAL

We call our readers' attention to the new seal which has appeared on the cover of *The Reconstructionist,* beginning with the first issue of Volume X. It is a graphic representation of the Reconstructionist program. The form is that of a wheel. The hub of the wheel is Palestine, the center of Jewish civilization from which all the dynamic forces of Judaism radiate. Religion, culture and ethics are the spokes by which the vital influence of Palestine affects and stimulates Jewish life everywhere and enables it to make its contribution to the civilization of mankind. The wheel has an inner and an outer rim. The inner rim represents the Jewish community that even in the dispersion maintains its contact with the Jewish civilization rooted in Palestine, by the spiritual bonds of religion, ethics and culture. The outer rim is the general community, for us the community of America, with which the Jewish civilization as lived by the Jewish community maintains contact at every point. The seal thus symbolizes in a simple emblem the whole philosophy of the Reconstructionist movement.

BOOK NOTES

NEW WORLD A-COMING, by Roi Ottley. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1943. pp. 364. $3.00.

Roi Ottley's book is subtitled "Inside Black America." It is an intimately detailed and racy story of Negro life, which uses Harlem "as a sort of test tube in which the germs of Negro thought and action are isolated, examined, and held up to full glare to reflect Black America." Though Ottley is interested in the mass and not in individuals, we get revealing pictures of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Joe Louis, of Garvey and Randolph and other Negro leaders and figures who give color to the social fabric of Negro life. And though he is primarily interested in telling of the Negro's search for democracy, Ottley gives us intimate glimpses of the bizarre patches and corners and colors, which make up the crazy-quilt of Black America. As Jews, who are faced with many of the same problems as the Negro in our search for democracy, this book should be of special concern to us. In addition there are two chapters on the Jews which should make particularly interesting reading. One entitled "Jews in Negro Life" deals with anti-Semitism among Negroes. It is a fair and balanced statement. Ottley himself feels that the issue of anti-Semitism is an artificial one, revolving around manufactured enemies; that it is largely an urban manifestation, stemming directly from the Negro's own depressed social and economic position, and therefore essentially an anti-White manifestation. It is just by chance that most of the storekeepers and many of the landlords in Harlem are Jewish.

Ottley points out that, though the Jewish people as a group have not adopted the Jim-Crow attitudes of non-Jewish Whites, there are individual Jews who follow the Jim-Crow pattern in their daily lives and in the conduct of their business. Similarly, while individual Jews have gone out of their way to befriend the Negro and fight for his rights, there is little being done by Jewish organizations to combat anti-Negro sentiment among the Jews. Ottley is right in reminding us that we have a duty and responsibility in this respect. We have not done enough to educate the Jewish owner and employer in Harlem and to eradicate anti-Negro sentiment among Jews generally.

Another chapter deals with "The Lost Tribe of Black Jews." Though Ottley has an exaggerated notion of the number of Black Jews, he does give us a fascinating account of our black brothers. Though the Black Jews are against 'crossing tribal traits,' this need not prevent the White Jews from taking a greater interest in them. Indeed we have our own problem in intercultural relations.

SAMUEL DININ.

CORRESPONDENCE

On Teaching Origin of Christianity to Jewish Children

Sirs:

Recently a fairly typical American-born Jewish mother related an occurrence which upset her family and set the small suburban Jewish community, in which she is an active worker, buzzing for days. Her daughter, one of the few Jewish girls in the local high school, returned home in tears one afternoon. At first she tried to conceal what had happened. After considerable cajoling by her mother she described a history lesson in which her instructor had dictated something to the effect that the "Jews in Jerusalem, eager to rebel against Rome, had rejected Jesus Christ because he came with a message of peace and good will."

The young girl was deeply hurt and perplexed. She had said nothing in school because, as she told her mother, she "didn't know what to say." I attempted to describe the historical background of that particular period, dweling on the condition and mood of the Jewish people, the relative powers of the priest, the Sanhedrin, the exilarch and the Roman officials. I likewise found it necessary to explain the concept of the Messiah.

The mother, her daughter and some friends, who were present at the time, felt considerably relieved and thanked me profusely. A bit of knowledge had dispelled mists of mystery and anxiety.

The number of Jewish young people and adults with this girl's anxiety and her mother's lack of information is legion. Absence of knowledge of this sort accounts in some measure for the psychological problems which beset Jews living in a predominantly Christian environment. Jewish educators must give careful consideration to the problem of presenting the history of early Christianity to Jewish children, adolescents and adults. To omit this subject from the scope of Jewish education is to take the path of least resistance, the path followed at the present by the vast majority of Jewish schools. More Jewish teachers skirt the problem without attempting to solve it. To be sure, the question entails numerous difficulties—difficulties in determining and selecting the facts and the methods of presenting them.

Some may favor the informal approach and advocate postponing discussion of the subject until it is raised by the pupils. Others may prefer to include the subject as part of the formal course of study, either in conjunction with the Roman period of Jewish history or as part of a course in "Religions of the World." Both the delineation of the problem and the methodology involved present a challenge to Jewish educators.

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